Wearables, Ingestibles, Implantables

The Inescapable Future of Healthcare

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Lions Health 2015, which was held June 19 and 20 in Cannes, France, was billed as a “festival of creativity” in healthcare communications. Although this event is most (in)famous for its awards for creativity (see “Like 3-Day Old Fish, #LionsHealth Grand Prix Prize Stinks!” on right), speakers also delved into the future of healthcare and healthcare communications.

I followed the discussion via the #LionsHealth Twitter stream where my attention was drawn to a panel discussion about “wearables, ingestibles, and implantables” (3 new buzzwords to add to my list: http://bit.ly/pmn140401p).

Marketing & Advertising Potential
“Wearable technology will likely change advertising and content as we know it,” say analysts in “The Wearable Future,” a new report by Pricewaterhouse-Coopers (http://bit.ly/1GCsZ1N).

According to eMarketer, citing a January 2015 Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) report, the “Internet of Things” (IoT), real-time mobile personalized transactions, wearable technology, and virtual/augmented reality are trends that senior marketing executives believe will have a big impact on marketers by 2020 (see Figure 1, below).

Like 3-Day Old Fish, #LionsHealth Grand Prix Prize Stinks!

A big part of Lions Health 2015 was a contest among healthcare and pharma advertising agencies vying for awards and honors meted out by their peers.

Desperate to award a Grand Prix this year to a pharma ad campaign, Lions Health judges declared DigitasLBI New York’s “Take it from a fish” for AstraZeneca Pharma Lions’s first Grand Prix.

Commenting on the choice, Jury President Rob Rogers, Chief Creative Officer and Co-CEO, Sudler, said that the winner “blew the door off the category” and dispelled the myth that a challenging environment was a barrier to ideas. “Regulations don’t define creativity. Constraints can sometimes help creativity.” Personally, I don’t see what’s creative about Abbott (aka “Sal”) and Costello (aka “Marty”) channeled as fish. It’s definitely not creative as usually defined by pharmaceutical marketers.

As an article in MM&M put it:
“The jury’s decision to name the DigitasLBI campaign was questioned by other agency executives, as well. For one, it’s a humor campaign, which seems to conflict with an ideological perspective that pharmaceutical creativity should be about saving lives, or at least dramatically improving them. It’s oft-cited that creative excellence in healthcare advertising depends on stirring the emotions of the viewer and tugging the heartstrings enough to spur some kind of action.”

Meaningful Relevance
PwC research cited above also revealed “tremendous opportunities for wearables to wow consumers and win them over with meaningful relevance—territories where the category is only now on the cusp of transforming our behavior in ways that improve our lives.”

As an example of what the wearable future might bring in terms of strengthened connections with family, friends, and healthcare providers that encourage goal-directed behavior, a Lions Health presenter displayed an image of a potential message from a doctor to a patient via an Apple Watch (see Figure 2, page 2).
This got me to thinking about some of the issues regarding wearables et al.

First, I thought this kind of message could be a promotional ad by a doctor trying to drum up new business. That would be unethical if there was no good reason to contact the wearer other than to generate an office visit.

Second—and more importantly—the very nature of wearable et al technology is how intrusive and in-escapable it is. We already are complaining about never being free from our mobile phones. Anyone—including our employers and advertisers—can now reach us wherever we are! Now include doctors, insurance companies, pharmaceutical marketers, etc., on that list.

It is somewhat more difficult to ignore a message on my Apple Watch than on my iPhone. It buzzes and shakes on my wrist and I automatically raise my arm to view it. It’s become a habit (see “How I Stopped Worrying About the Battery and Learned to Love My Apple Watch!” on right). Imagine if it were an implanted device!

**Options Can Be Controlled, But Often Are Not**

Now, I know we can turn off certain features and opt out of receiving messages from certain sources. But, according to a PEW survey, “the vast majority of respondents – 91% – had not made any changes to their internet or cellphone use to avoid having their activities tracked or noticed. Only 7% reported that they had made these kinds of changes in ‘recent months’” (see “Americans’ Attitudes About Privacy, Security, and Surveillance”; [http://pewrsr.ch/1JcbNE9](http://pewrsr.ch/1JcbNE9)).

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Interestingly, only 13% of the marketers surveyed by EIU felt that “privacy backlash” would have a big impact on their future marketing plans.

Americans apparently have given up on being left alone and healthcare marketers are rushing to take advantage of that trend to make advertising, which they mask under the label “healthcare,” inescapable.

Here’s what one healthcare ad agency CEO tweeted during Lions Health 2015: “The future of healthcare is here it’s just not evenly distributed. Broadening access to care is critical.” No doubt this ad agency CEO knows full well the marketing potential of “broadening access.”

### Promising Better Outcomes

Wearable technology holds great promise for the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry.

“The promise of keeping patients out of hospital via remote monitoring and providing timely health and lifestyle advice and feedback is a major draw,” noted the author of an PMLive article (“Wearing it well: the healthcare potential of wearable technology”; [http://bit.ly/1H2dP7r](http://bit.ly/1H2dP7r)). One wonders, however, about the effectiveness of wearables *et al* to actually improve the quality of life.

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The question “Can Mobile, Apps and Wearables Make an Impact on Health Outcomes?” was addressed during a panel discussion I moderated at CBI’s iPharma 2015 conference in May, 2015, in New York City. The discussion focused on:

- Understanding the role of pharma in the utilization of wearables and apps
- Reviewing regulations surrounding apps and wearables and whether they are medical devices
- Unlocking the power of these technologies in terms of patient adherence and education

**Virtuous Circle**
Panel member Jamie Manning, Former Program Manager, TOUCH Applications, Biogen Idec, and currently Director, Digital Strategy and Marketing at Decision Resources Group, painted a picture of a wearable “virtuous circle” in which patients, healthcare providers, and pharma companies are connected.

“Think of a scenario where data from the patient is going to the doctor and the pharma company,” said Manning. “The manufacturer is getting continual information about how their drug is working across a large patient population. They use this information to do follow-up studies and make sure they are doing the best by the patient. At the end of the day, the patient is getting the best possible outcome because of small wearable devices like the Apple Watch. It’s all done in a continuous stream and comes right from your wrist.”

An audience member was concerned about the usefulness of information from wearables taken out of context. Was the patient under stress, is he or she going through a divorce, etc. “With all this data available, we’re still missing the part about caring for the patient,” she said.

Another attendee noted that “we are living in a world where we can hardly get patients to take one pill every day. How are we going to engineer these devices so that patients are actually wearing them and collecting the data?”

**Can Wearables Deliver on the Promise?**
Meanwhile, some studies suggest that wearables et al may not be as effective as futurists envision (see “Study: Mobile-Based Health Coaching with Tele-monitoring Fails to Improve Quality of Life”, page 3). As Manning noted: “If the patient doesn’t benefit, if the technology doesn’t raise the efficacy of medicines, and increase lifespans, none of this is worth five cents.”

**Too Early to Worry?**
It’s difficult to say how long it will take wearable devices such as the Apple Watch to become mainstream and something for marketers to worry about. Although there’s a lot of current buzz about wearables, Manhattan Research’s Monique Levy told attendees at the February, 2015, ePharma Summit in New York City, not to worry about wearables.

“Everyone wants to know what’s happening with wearables,” said Levy. “I wouldn’t worry about it. Unless you’re working in the innovation team and you’re thinking five years ahead, I wouldn’t stay up all night worrying about wearables. You need to worry about smart-phones and what you’re doing to be mobile optimized.”

Still, smart innovators should not automatically dismiss the technology because of the concerns mentioned above. As a keynote speaker at the iPharma 2015 conference said, true innovators and their pharma partners should emulate how Walt Disney suggested his staff greet new ideas. Instead of saying "No, because...” they should say “Yes, and...” add suggestions for how the idea could work.